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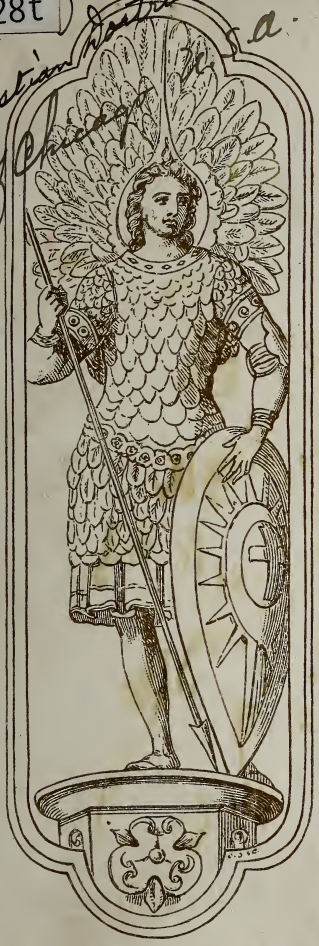

The Three Archangels and the Guardian Angels in Art

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By
Eliza Allen Starr

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The Three Archangels and the Guardian Angels in Art

RAPHAEL

SAINT MICHAEL—THE LOUVRE

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The Three Archangels and the Guardian Angels in Art

BY

ELIZA ALLEN STARR

Bless the Lord, all ye His angels
PSALMS 102—20

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TO MY OWN

GUARDIAN ANGEL

AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NINE BLISSFUL
CHOIRS, WITH ALL REVERENCE
AS WELL AS GRATITUDE, THIS LITTLE
BOOK IS DEDICATED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
SAINT MICHAEL,	17
SAINT GABRIEL,	33
SAINT RAPHAEL,	49
THE GUARDIAN ANGELS,	63

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SAINT MICHAEL, *Vignette*, ... FRA ANGELICO
SAINT MICHAEL, *Frontispiece*, ... RAPHAEL
SAINT MICHAEL, *in the Assumption*, . . . PERUGINO
SAINT MICHAEL, *a detail from the Assumption* PERUGINO
SAINT GABRIEL, *in the Annunciation*, . . CATACOMB
SAINT GABRIEL, *in the Annunciation*, . . FRA ANGELICO
SAINT GABRIEL, *in the Annunciation*, . DELLA ROBBIA
SAINT GABRIEL, *in the Agony*, ... OVERBECK
SAINT RAPHAEL, *the Angel of Healing*, . . PERUGINO
SAINT RAPHAEL *and Tobias*, ... LUINI
SAINT RAPHAEL *and Tobias*, . . . VON DEUTSCH
SAINT RAPHAEL *and Tobias*, ... OVERBECK
SAINT RAPHAEL, *Prince of Guardians*, . . RAPHAEL
SAINT JOHN OF GOD, ... MURILLO
SAINT FRANCES OF ROME, ... ITTENBACH
GUARDIAN ANGEL, ... MINTROP
GUARDIAN ANGELS, *in the Resurrection*, FRA ANGELICO

Preface

The devotion to the Holy Angels — that hierarchy, with its nine glorious choirs distinctly named in Holy Writ — of which so many masterpieces of art are magnificent exponents, is nourished as a household virtue by the lovely Sodality of the Guardian Angels, by which our youths and maidens are initiated into the spirit of more advanced devotion and practices. Their Guardian Angels lead them into the ranks of the Blessed Virgin Mary, preparing them to be her leal knights or her faithful daughters; onward to the still more interior, meditative devotion to the Sacred Heart, with its expositions of the Blessed Sacrament, its reparations to the wounded yet ever most-loving Heart of our Lord; the rose-tinted ribbon of the Guardian Angel's medal preceding the azure of the Virgin Mother's, the crimson of the Passion of the world's Redeemer.

Still, the devotion to the Guardian Angel is not merely an initiatory one; if intelligent it must be lifelong, this Guardian Angel being no myth, no phantom, but a living, ever-present reality, walking with us whether in crowds or in deserts, the adviser as well as the protector and friend, with whom we have daily, hourly, a more conscious intimacy, a more confidential intercourse.

Moreover, the simplicity of trust in the child for its own individual Guardian Angel is to be supplemented by knowledge such as comes from a familiarity with traditions world-wide, and stretching backward into prehistoric ages, concerning the part which the angels, in the several orders of their hierarchy, have borne in the story of the world, of the universe itself. Dionysius the Areopagite, of the first Christian century, wrote learnedly as well as devoutly of the angels, and they have entered into the studies of the most exact theologians in ages which have nourished a supernatural as well as a scientific erudition. Woven and interwoven as the ministrations of angels have been with

events in the world's history, their supernatural but clearly recognized intervention in this real, actual story surpasses any which even a Homer could recount; the records of the messengers from Olympus paling before the angelic deliverances wrought, as in the case of Heliodorus, of the Maccabees, and as related by Saint Luke, evangelist, in the Acts of the Apostles, of the deliverance of Saint Peter from prison, whose chains, which dropped from his hands and feet at the command of the angel, still witness, in the ancient church of *San Pietro in Vincoli*, Rome, to the verity of the rescue.

What wonder if art laid hold of these inspiring traditions, these glorious narrations, enriching the ages by representations quickening spiritual perception, displaying so winningly, yet powerfully, the spiritual organism of a world, fallen indeed from its original innocence, but dignified immeasurably by the fact of Redemption; by the actual life, on this earth, of Him who was, verily, "the Word made flesh and dwelling among us"; the Incarnation, in itself, surpassing all that

can be said or imagined of angelic intervention.

The motive underlying the writing of these pages, we trust, will be apparent to all who peruse them. They were prepared for the columns of the *Ave Maria*, in which they appeared during October, the month in which the angels are specially honored; and it is by the courtesy of the editor of the *Ave Maria*, Rev. Daniel E. Hudson, C. S. C., that we are permitted to publish them in their present form. The reproductions of those great masterpieces which have done so much to make heaven a reality to us, which are now given along with the text, we hope will be considered not merely as embellishments to this little volume, but as a means to plant, as it were, the images of these celestial friends in the memories and imaginations of all who thus become familiar with them, illuminating not only the morning hour of meditation to the recluse in her stall, but weaving themselves into the thoughts of the woman of the world intent upon her domestic or social round, and even of the man of

business, whose energies may seem to be directed only to the material things of this world, but whose thoughts are free to soar; soar to those empyrean heights for which, as immortal beings, we are born, and from which, in answer to our fervent ejaculation, may come help for the present trouble, the dire emergency. To the uplifting of this daily life of mundane necessities, these pages and their angelic embellishments are devoutly consecrated.

Saint Joseph's Cottage, Michaelmas, 1899.

PERUGINO

SAINT MICHAEL IN THE ASSUMPTION

Saint Michael

Resplendent intelligences, magnificent exponents of the infinite wisdom, power, and beauty of God; spiritual bodies, immortal, impassible, moving with a swiftness transcending that of light; abiding in the immediate presence of God and radiant with the splendors shed over them by the Beatific Vision!

Such were the angels before the morning-stars sang together, the first creative act of the Triune Godhead; created as an overflow, a blissful necessity, so to speak, of the essential beatitude of this Trinal Unity. One moment of the silence born of awe—then the full burst of praise, thanksgiving, adoration, from Archangels, Seraphim, Cherubim, Powers, Principalities; rank on rank, file on file, group weaving into group; hosannas mingling with alleluias, and the infinite

sweetness of harmonious sounds has been born in heaven!

To wing our thoughts for that epoch of creation when the angels stood forth thus in their plenitude of supernatural gifts to the eyes of the exultant Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is to touch a point not, indeed, infinitely distant, although not to be comprehended by the mortal intellect; but where the imagination of a Fra Angelico poised itself to contemplate an empyrean of bliss through which floated, more lightly than any wreath of vapor over our bluest welkin, the newly-created inhabitants of heaven; giving us, as nothing else can, a perception of the essential joy of existence, and that existence not only emanating from God, but finding its supreme bliss, its sole end and aim, in God Himself.

But what means this trumpet-call from the ranks of these blessed ones,—a blast of defiance, as if there could be discord in heaven? And, lo! Lucifer, son of the morning, the most resplendent in all those ranks of shining ones, his place nearest to the

Beatific Vision, its rainbows breaking over his wings, stands forth in open rebellion to his Maker, drawing with him a third part of the host of heaven. But that trumpet-blast is answered by a battle-cry: "Who is like God?" And Michael, next in beauty, next in majesty, leads his host against Lucifer, and Saint John tells us, in his Apocalypse, there "was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with Lucifer and his angels; but these last prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven." Lucifer was cast forth, and with him his angels; and hell sprang into being by the same creative word which had called forth, to bliss, the angelic hosts; while, as a reward for their fidelity, Michael and his angels, having used their free-will on the side of God, were confirmed by Him in their perfection, to be thenceforth incapable of sin.

While nothing of all this is narrated in the Old Testament, the allusions in the Epistle of Saint Jude to what must have been living traditions with the Hebrews, mingled with the narrative in the Apocalypse of Saint

John, give us the tragedy enacted in heaven itself before the foundations of the earth and the world were laid; and from this point in the story of the universe begins that of Saint Michael, prince of the archangels and conqueror of Lucifer himself.

The first mention made in the sacred Scriptures of the angels, tells us that God "set Cherubim before the gate of the Garden of Eden with a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." From this time we read of angels as the companions of patriarchs, as the special friends of the good, as the special instruments of retribution for the wicked. The Hebrews, however, while believing in the angels as personal guardians and avengers, regarded one as the appointed protector of their nation and of their religion, named the Prince, appearing to Abraham at the door of his tent at Mamre, promising to him a posterity like the stars in heaven; to Jacob on a ladder of glory, as he slept with his head on a stone, and then wrestled with him until dawn; also when he was to meet his brother Esau.

It is this prince of the angels who works with Moses in the deliverance of the Hebrews from their Egyptian oppressors, smiting the first-born of man and of beast, performing wonders which overcome Pharaoh and all his devices; their defender and guide during the forty years' wandering in the desert; the immediate inspiration of Moses under all the emergencies of the novitiate of a nation to be the chosen people of God.

To the Leader who succeeded the Law-giver, the appearance of this patron of the Hebrew people was still more pronounced: "And when Joshua was by Jericho he lifted up his eyes and saw a man standing over against him, holding a drawn sword; and he went to him and said: Art thou for us or for our adversaries? And he answered: I am the prince of the host of the Lord." And this apparition is followed, in the narrative, by the miraculous taking of Jericho, the actual entrance into and taking possession of the Promised Land; while apparition after apparition marks the decisive periods in the history of God's people.

To the Prophet Daniel, however, came a manifestation inspiring a description of angelic glories which has never been exceeded by mortal pen, never realized by mortal brush; this being of dazzling perfections announcing to Daniel under what auspices the affairs of the world were then being conducted, and giving the name of him to whose charge the people of God had been committed—"Michael your prince." Then, passing from that present time to a future: "At that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people."

In those concise but often poetic annotations with which our own erudite Most Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick, D.D., embellished his translation of the entire Scriptures, we find this note appended to what we have just quoted concerning Saint Michael: "He was regarded as the protector of the Israelites. He is now considered the protector of the Church." Every intelligent altar boy, the world over, is familiar with the invocation to Saint Michael appended to the

prayers prescribed by his Holiness Leo XIII., to be said in behalf of the Church by priest and people after every low Mass. We thus see, in this last year of the nineteenth century, the same belief in the championship of Saint Michael which was expressed, so pointedly, in the first centuries by Saint John and Saint Jude.

In Christian art there has never been a time, even in the unlighted catacombs with their narrow spaces, when angels did not come into the representations of supernatural events. But no sooner did mosaic lend itself to the adornment of the early basilicas, than angels, resplendent, awe-inspiring, filled the upper line of vast apses radiant with celestial visions; glorifying the compositions of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, inspired, as they were, not only by the Apocalypse of Saint John, but by such manifestations of Saint Michael as that, in 493, to the Bishop over Monte Gargano, in Apulia, Italy, commanding him to build a church there, which has been from that time a place of pilgrimage.

But a manifestation still more imposing marked the pontificate of Gregory the Great, in 590, when the pestilence devastating Rome and the entire region called out, as a last resource of that Pontiff, a three days' procession, in which entire Rome may be said to have joined as penitents; patricians, plebeians; the young as well as the old and middle aged; mothers with their babes; monks and nuns, abbots and abbesses; Gregory himself with bare feet, and the Madonna of Saint Luke, now treasured in the Borghese chapel of Saint Mary Major, carried as a banner. On the third day, as the procession was passing the mausoleum of Hadrian, the Pontiff, raising his eyes, saw, standing on its summit, the Archangel Michael sheathing his sword, as if he had come triumphant from the battlefield of death. From that moment the plague ceased. A church was dedicated there in honor of Saint Michael, and the mausoleum has borne ever since the name of Castle Angelo. The statue which we see to-day was placed there by Benedict XIV. more than eleven hundred and fifty years after the

apparition; and yet, as some one has said, the bronze statue, "with its vast wings poised in air, seen against the deep-blue sky of Rome or lighted up by its golden sunset, can never seem other than a vision."

The Greek schools were rich in angelic accessories. Cimabue, Giotto, Duccio, the Lorenzetti, were never at a loss for legions of angels; while the archangels were represented with a dignity and graciousness never to be excelled. But the glorious personality of Saint Michael seizes us in a way not to be resisted, when we come to that golden age in which the inspirations of the devout artist clothed themselves with those beautiful garments which come from a perfect technique, with no loss, but rather a gain, to spirituality. Never was the first triumph of good over evil so vividly portrayed as when Raphael, with his hand of marvelous lightness, sketched that Saint Michael which is one of the glories of the Louvre, unapproached, we may say unapproachable.

Guido Reni's Saint Michael in the church of the Cappuccini, Rome, gives the moment

in which the spear of the defender of God's majesty touches the rebellious angel, turning him into a groveling monster. But the descent upon his adversary is a premeditated one; while in Raphael's, the aërial leader of the heavenly host, glorious in the perfections of his unsullied angelic nature, wholly intent upon repairing the outraged majesty of God, darts with the speed of lightning through the infinite spaces of heaven; the spear held in both hands ready to strike from aloft; the foot scarcely touching the hideous creature beneath him; but the victory is there, won in the name of God, and therefore with a lofty serenity, an unconscious majesty, which places it among the wonders of mortal conceptions and of mortal achievements. It is as if the story of Saint Michael as told by Saint John had been heard, for the first time, by the young man Raphael, and projected upon the canvas with the swiftness of a well-nigh angelic genius.

On a wall of the Sistine Chapel, Luca Signorelli gives the journey of Moses and his wife Zipporah into Egypt; and we see in

PERUGINO

SAINT MICHAEL, FROM THE ASSUMPTION

the center of the foreground Michael, in all the grandeur of the prince of God's people, withstanding Moses; forbidding his progress; which is explained by the neglect of Moses to circumcise his youngest son, thus bringing contempt upon the law; while to Michael is accorded a leadership higher than that of Moses. The scene alluded to by Saint Jude in his epistle, "When Michael the Archangel, disputing with the devil, contended about the body of Moses," is given on the entrance wall of the Sistine Chapel by Cecchino Salviati; and it is safe to say that none of the events in which Saint Michael, as in the case of Heliodorus, takes in hand the cause of God, have been overlooked in those matchless serials illustrating the sacred writings by Christian artists in one century or another.

A greater contrast to the treatment of Saint Michael by Raphael, when both are of such exalted beauty, could hardly be imagined than that of his master, Perugino; the best example of which is in that line of saints giving such a meditative loveliness to Peru-

gino's great Assumption. The whole picture, indeed, is conceived in a meditative spirit. The ascent of the Blessed Virgin itself is serene, and is contemplated with silent rapture by those four saints called "the four ambrosial saints," inasmuch as they seem, in their beatitude, to have been nourished on the ambrosia of celestial delights. The first to the right, as we look at the picture, represents Saint Michael, his victory won, yet still in the panoply of the prince of the angelic hosts, the helmet crowned by the slender plumes of the bird of paradise; one hand on his shield, his sword in sheath, and the beauty of the face altogether youthful.

Fra Angelico — whose name indicates his predilection, whose angels we may call countless, from those lovely choirs standing around the throne, holding caressingly to their cheeks the viols whereon they celebrate in blissful strains the glory of Mary in her Coronation, as we see it in the Louvre; or in those charming groups, weaving, interweaving in a gentle rhythmic dance, as expressive of joy as

the viols or the voices of the cantors, of that other Coronation in the Uffizi, in which a radiance, reminding one of our Northern Lights, spreads upward and around from the throne on which sits the Eternal Son laying the crown on the head of His Mother—has not failed to give us Saint Michael in the distinctive personality of his princely leadership, cased in armor from shoulder to heel, the wings not spread, but rising above the head like plumes; one hand supporting his shield, the other bearing his lance, and the expression that of a watchman on the heights of Paradise; not only victorious, but still the ever present, matchless defender of God and of His Church.

Besides these impersonations of Saint Michael as prince and leader of the heavenly host, we see him, from century to century in art, under the several offices appointed to him for the dead as well as the living, especially as the Angel of the Last Judgment. Here we come to the Campo Santo and to Orcagna's Last Judgment, as the one which gives, at a glance, more than any

other, the dogma with all that is implied in the repeated asseverations of our Lord in regard to it, as well as that mingling of mercy and of justice which impresses the Christian imagination and instructs the Christian conscience. It is Michael who disposes, unerringly, to the right or to the left the risen bodies; while the awfulness of the scene is evidenced, first by the Blessed Virgin, who is seen at the side of her Divine Son in a mandorla of light, imploring Him to have mercy on fallen man; and again by the angel, who, angel as he is, sinless, untouched by the curse of Lucifer, still cowers, with his mantle to his face, as he beholds the sights and hears the awful sounds of the Day of Doom.

One apparition of Saint Michael we have kept to the last, as linking the whole story with our present time. This manifestation was made in 706 to Saint Aubert, Bishop of Avranches. In the reign of Childebert II. this holy man had a vision, in which the Archangel Michael commanded him to build a church on a lofty, isolated rock, inaccess-

ible from the land at high tide, and the terror of mariners. To this day the spot has maintained its domination over the Gulf of Avranches and over Normandy itself. The small church at first erected was replaced by the magnificent abbey church begun by Richard, Duke of Normandy, in 966, and finished by William the Conqueror, a shrine and a fortress in one, over which no other banner has waved than that bearing the lilies of France.

To-day our tourists as well as our pilgrims brave all the fatigues which attend the visitation of *Mont-Saint-Michel*, and bring to our American cities the solemn impressions left on their minds by this monument to the traditions of Saint Michael; remembering that this patron of the Universal Church is, in special, the patron of France; manifesting himself to Joan d'Arc, the Maid of Orleans, thus bestowing another honor not only upon France but on Christian womanhood.

Our Saint Michael, prince of the heavenly host,—we cannot leave our theme with its splendors, its heroism, without a word for the

floral host which so beautifies our American meadows, our hillsides, our nooks, on the great Feast of Saint Michael, the 29th of September; and while comparatively few of the shifting multitudes scattered over our prairies, our vast stretches of what otherwise would seem a desert, associate these flowers in their varied loveliness with the festival, yet they bear to all men a hint of the tradition of the great Archangel in their significant name of Michaelmas-daisies.

CATACOMB

SAINT GABRIEL IN THE ANNUNCIATION

Saint Gabriel

Gabriel, the Strength of God! Let us take the description of this radiant being—beautiful in his strength, doing wonders—from Daniel, to whom he came in vision to make known the hidden counsels of God: "I was by the great river, which is the Tigris. And I lifted up my eyes and I saw a man clothed in linen, and his loins were girded with the finest gold. His body was like the chrysolite, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as a burning lamp; his arms and all downward, even to the feet, like in appearance to glittering brass; and the voice of his word like the voice of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, and I fainted away and retained no strength. Therefore he that looked like a man touched me and strengthened me; and he said: Fear not, O man of desires! Peace be to thee!

Take courage and be strong. And when he spake to me I grew strong."

It was to this appearance of a man, clothed in linen, that a voice called out: "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." And again: "As I was yet speaking in prayer, behold, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, flying swiftly, touched me at the time of the evening sacrifice."

Thus, five hundred years before the coming of our Lord, this Angel is made known to us by name; his office declared, himself a glorious personality, to which the imagination of mortals became familiarized by pen, as it has been since by pencil and brush; although mortal tints must fail before this impersonation of the glorious inhabitants of heaven,—the bodyguard, so to speak, of Him who "dwells in light inaccessible."

The description and the solemnity of the circumstances under which this angel appeared to Daniel, prepare us for revelations of the supremest moment, not only for the Hebrew people, but for mankind, for the entire human

race. Hear these mysterious predictions: "Seventy weeks are shortened upon thy people and upon thy holy city; that transgression may be finished, and sin may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished, and everlasting justice may be brought, and vision and prophecy fulfilled, and the Holy of Holies may be anointed. Know thou, therefore, and take notice: from the going forth of the word to build Jerusalem again unto Christ the Prince there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, and the street shall be built again, and the walls in straitness of times. And after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain; and the people that shall deny Him shall not be His."

To this follows the prediction of the destruction of the temple, the appointed desolation, with a mysterious allusion to that week of weeks which we call Holy Week,— "He shall confirm the covenant with many in one week: and in the half of the week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail." According to Archbishop Kenrick, the death of Christ our Lord, so plainly predicted by this

prophecy, corresponded to the time here given, it having been four hundred and ninety years from its pronouncement by the Angel Gabriel to its fulfillment; while the death of our Lord in the midst of the week, gives a literalness to the prophecy which, of itself, fills the imagination with a supreme awe. It is with reference to this prophecy that the title of "The Angel of the Redemption" has been awarded to Gabriel.

Those four pilasters which give so unique an adornment to the façade of the Duomo at Orvieto, have been a book of instruction, before which every sculptor, from Giotto to Michael Angelo, and even to our own day, has lingered with veneration; telling, as they do in their beautifully arranged reliefs, the story of mankind from the creation to the Last Judgment; but the third may be called the pilaster of the Redemption, the story of Gabriel in the Old and the New Testament being set forth in these groups with the closest possible adherence to his special office in relation to man.

Yet, notwithstanding the awe-inspiring

majesty of his introduction to us in the Holy Scriptures, he is first recognized by the popular mind in the Annunciation,— that mystery of mysteries, as we may say, but clothed with a loveliness that has held, transported, the eye of the artist and the heart of the poet for twenty centuries; reproduced by brush, chisel, or the tool of the mosaic worker, in the infinite beauty of its relations to every other Christian mystery or dogma. Sometimes we see it filling in the corners of an arch on which has been represented a crucifixion; again, giving a subject for the folding-wings of some grand altar piece, like the Adoration of the Magi, or the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin; always graceful, always charming, supplying, to a meditative mind, the mysterious link between the Incarnation and the Redemption.

Scarcely had the never-to-be-rivaled first century closed upon the world when the ceiling of a Roman catacomb — no other than that of Saint Priscilla on the Salarian Way — bore its testimony to the Incarnation, to Mary, the Mother of Him who was to re-

deem the world, and to Gabriel, the Angel of the promised Redemption; while the beauty of the ceiling itself is to be regarded as a tribute to the mystery. Doves — those doves to be seen everywhere in Rome — flutter gently at the four corners of this underground apartment; classic garlands, disposed with a certain chaste elegance which is not mere symmetry, touching at four points a gemmed circle, which encloses a scene comparing, in purity of outline, with the choicest conceptions of early Greece.

The immaculate daughter of Joachim and Anna, the virgin spouse of Joseph,— robed with the simplicity of a maiden reared in the temple, her mantle resting on her head and upon one shoulder,— is seated in one of those antique chairs which served as thrones; the figure in complete repose, the head bent modestly forward, as before her stands one who comes to her as a messenger — a messenger from the King of kings,— to announce that of her is to be born that Messiah for whom Mary herself and her entire nation are so eagerly looking. His tunic of classic sim-

plicity is loosely girded, held by the left hand, while the right is extended toward Mary with the index finger claiming the attention his message deserves, his head inclining earnestly toward her as her left hand is slightly raised, expressing some delicate scruple.

And this messenger, who is not even winged, who has come in so noiselessly upon her maiden solitude, who answers her scruple so gently, who regards with such veneration this tender flower of virginity, as if he feared the stem might break under the weight of the mystery, is that Gabriel who revealed himself in all his terrible beauty to Daniel as the Strength of God; before whom the prophet fainted, to whom he was afraid to raise his eyes even when conversing with him. It is as if, in this first delineation of the Annunciation, the artist had entered, by meditation, into the very presence of the Virgin and the Angel, realizing the tenderness as well as the awful grandeur of the mystery.

In the first group on the Arch of Triumph in Saint Mary Major, the Annunciation is very differently conceived. The Blessed Vir-

gin is seated on a decorated throne, regally attired, accompanied by five winged angels; while flying swiftly through the air, as he came to Daniel five hundred years before, is seen the winged Gabriel, the right hand and index finger extended toward the Virgin; and, descending toward her as swiftly, the Dove of the Holy Spirit.

The sublime Annunciation by Pietro Lorenzetti of Siena gives the same divine hymn of joy, of praise, but on another key. Gabriel is here the Strength of God, but the strength has that quality of serene majesty which belongs to eternal things. The Virgin is seated; her mantle, which is drawn over her head, and her tunic are richly embroidered; an open book rests upon her lap; her hands are crossed with exquisite sweetness and modesty over her bosom, and her eyes are raised to welcome the mystic Dove descending toward her, while one sees *Ecce ancilla Domini* on the background, as if just breathed forth by her virginal lips. A lily stands between Mary and the Angel, who is kneeling, his vestments royally embroidered, his head covered with a

FRA ANGELICO

SAINT GABRIEL IN THE ANNUNCIATION

linen cowl, over which is a crown of olive leaves, symbol of peace and joy; two sets of radiant wings spring from his shoulders—one raised, the other pendant; in one hand he bears a palm, the other hand gives the gesture of one whose mission has been fulfilled, and the grave, noble face is turned heavenward, in adoration of a mystery accomplished.

We can almost feel our readers urging us to hasten our steps toward that Annunciation in the cloister of Saint Mark, Florence, by Fra Angelico; and, strange to say, while the Dominican lay-brother gives long wings to his Gabriel, it is, in tenderness of spirit, nearer to the one in Saint Priscilla's Cemetery than any other we know of—the tenderness to be regarded as its characteristic. "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse," is the image which seems to have filled the mind of the Angelical Friar, as he limned, in a meditative trance, this never-to-be-imitated Annunciation. A garden enclosed, literally; for we see the high fence, the trees of the adjoining grounds, with here and there a tall cypress; see, too, the March turf, en-

ameled with young plants just sending up their budding stalks, coming close to the edge of the arched cloister with its slender pillars and their acanthus capitals, within which sits that Blessed Maiden chosen from all eternity to be the Mother of the world's Redeemer—sits there so lowlily on a bench, such as we see standing about within the precincts of any convent. There is no kneeling-stool, no book of prayers or of prophecies at hand; her own holy thoughts filling her mind with a peace past our comprehending.

It is to this scene that our Gabriel has winged his flight; and now, with a gentle genuflection, both hands crossed on his breast, his face beaming with the joy of heaven, he salutes the Maiden with his "Hail, full of grace: the Lord is with thee!" The tender Virgin is not startled: she only inclines modestly toward the Angel and crosses her hands as if waiting for him to reveal to her the purport of his visit. Gabriel does not raise his index finger even; there is no descending Dove, no lily; but how put into words the sweetness of admiration, the lovingness of

DELLA ROBBIA

SAINT GABRIEL IN THE ANNUNCIATION

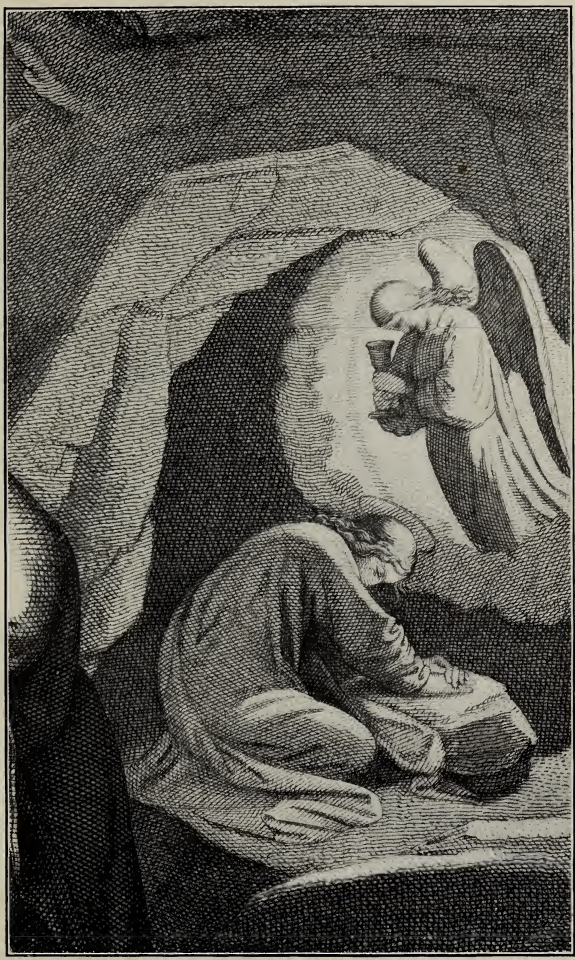
worshipful veneration, in every line of that genuflecting figure? There was no shrinking from the Angel, no shrinking from his message, to the mind of Fra Angelico; and the question, "How can this be?" appeared to him in his tranced rapture over the mystery, to have been asked with her interior peace unbroken, to overflow in the response, "Be it done unto me according to thy word."

But Florence, so highly favored among cities, holds still another Gabriel, another Annunciation, before which we pause as before the summing up of the mystery and its fruit. On the *Piazza Annunziata* stands the beautiful church of that name, to which lead up the arcades on the spandrels of which the Della Robbias left those pathetic effigies of the Holy Innocents, each with its death-wound while still in its swaddling clothes; for within is that refuge of the foundlings of Florence tenderly named *I Innocenti*, or "The Innocents," as if to bespeak for them the compassion of the faithful. In one of the corridors, so as to meet the eye of every child and every visitor, is this grandest of

all Annunciations, in terra cotta and at the hand of a Della Robbia—the whole enclosed in an arch of cherubs' heads.

The Virgin is kneeling with a book of prayers or prophecies; before her is a vase filled with lilies. All is composure, until the silence of her hour of prayer or of meditation is broken by the salutation: "Hail, full of grace: the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women!" The Maiden looks up—not startled, but laying one hand on her shoulder with a movement of the gentlest humility, to see kneeling before her our Gabriel, in one hand a bunch of lilies, the right hand and its mighty index finger raised to declare a message such as he had not been charged to give even to Daniel, yet involving all that he had predicted to that prophet five hundred years before.

Mary was versed in the prophecies of her people, and with the sound of Gabriel's voice must have come to her an echo of that awful sentence which had so often arrested her thought as she read: "The Christ shall be slain, and the people that shall deny Him



OVERBECK

SAINT GABRIEL IN THE AGONY

shall not be His." And we recall this, too, of Gabriel, rightly named the Strength of God, for we see it in every line of that powerful figure in its wonderful drapery. The Mother who is to lay her Babe in the manger, who is to flee with Him into Egypt, is to stand for three hours beneath His cross, is before him; and Gabriel says to her: "Fear not, Mary, . . . of His kingdom there shall be no end" — the promise given so as to come back to her in her hour of desolation. This is Luca della Robbia's Gabriel; and we never see that index finger emphasizing his message, but the Incarnation and the Redemption are given by one voice, as only Gabriel could give them.

Nevertheless, another office had been committed to Gabriel. Thirty-three years have been passed on the earth by Him who had come to redeem not only the Hebrew but the Gentile. Again and again has He been denied by this people of whose lineage He had come; the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy is at hand; the sop has been given to Judas; the traitor's kiss is awaiting Him; the heavy

breathing of His three chosen disciples in their sleep comes to Him under the olive-trees of Gethsemane; the world He has made, its sins and ingratitude, the price at which it must be redeemed as His own again, rises before Him; the Precious Blood, so soon to water the floor of Pilate's Prætorium, stain the paving stones of the streets of Jerusalem, give its last drop on Calvary, oozes through the pores of that sacred body, trickles down to the ground; and from the lips, parched with the death-agony, comes the cry, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!" But even as the cry escapes the lips, through the gloom of the olive-trees, of the deep midnight, comes a vested form of light on mighty wings, and the cup he bears in his hands is to be, verily, the Strength of God, borne to Him by His own Archangel!

It is Overbeck who puts this scene before us as no other has done. Once he painted it as a subject by itself; but we pass that by to linger, meditate, perhaps weep, over a corner in one of his Forty Illustrations; finding there what will come back to us, we

believe, when we enter the valley of the shadow of death, and we are ready to cry out, "Father, if it be possible!" For through the glooms of death and of mortality, He who died that we might live, will send to us His own consoler—he who is the Strength of God, even Gabriel, His Archangel.

PERUGINO

SAINT RAPHAEL AS THE ANGEL OF HEALING

Saint Raphael

Medicine of God and His Healing Angel, prince of the Guardian Angels and guide of travelers, promoter and protector of holy wedlock,—such are the gracious offices assigned in Holy Writ, according to the traditions of God's chosen people and the Christians of the first centuries, to Raphael, Archangel; attracting us by his benignity, charming us, from the first age of Christian art to this present one, by the representations of his affable consideration for our humanity under its most engaging and its most pathetic aspects; for glorious as his presence must have been under all its manifestations, the glory was tempered to meet the fallen condition of our race.

Thus, while Michael was regarded by the Hebrews as the prince of the hosts of the Lord in heaven and on earth, to Raphael

were committed those journeyings which make so significant a part of the story of God's chosen people; going back even to the patriarch Abraham, who expresses this traditional belief in his instructions to the elder servant of his house who was over all that he had, when sending him to his own country, Ur of the Chaldees, to secure a wife for his son Isaac: "The Lord God of heaven, who took me out of my father's house and out of my native country, who spake to me and sware to me, saying: To thy seed will I give this land; He will send His angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife for my son thence." Again to Moses, setting forth on that journey of forty years through the desert: "Behold I send my angel before thee, to keep thee on thy journey and bring thee into the place which I have prepared"; and this promise was renewed immediately after the grievous fall of the Hebrews into idolatry at the foot of Mount Sinai. Still again, when, the desert passed, Moses, making request of the King of Edom to pass through his country to their

promised destination, says: "The Lord sent our angel who hath brought us out of Egypt."

In none of these instances is the name of the angel given, but Raphael has been regarded in every age as the guide of the Israelites to the Promised Land; and it was in accordance with this tradition as held by the Hebrew people that his office as guide of travelers was brought out in the Book of Tobias. According to Archbishop Kenrick — who, we may say here, is quoted as authority throughout the Roman Breviary translated out of Latin into English by John, Marquis of Bute — this book, named Tobias, was composed during the captivity of the Jews in Chaldee. Saint Jerome found a copy of it, which he translated from the Chaldean language into Latin with the aid of a Jew, who explained it to him in Hebrew. Hippolytus, a Roman of the early part of the third century, speaks of the prayer of Tobias and of Sara, and of the angel sent to heal them. It is also mentioned by Origen, who was a witness, so early as 254, to the belief of Christians; by Saint Basil in 379; Saint

U. OF ILL. LIB.

Ambrose, 397; Saint Jerome, 420; and before 430 by Saint Augustine. The Book of Tobias is included in the Canon composed in the Council of Hippo, and also in the Third Council of Carthage, at which Saint Augustine was present.

Leaving to our readers to peruse by themselves this charming narrative, we come to its treatment in art, to find it delineated in that catacomb of apostolic times, Saint Priscilla on the Salarian Way, in a picture belonging to the second century, in which the young Tobias is represented as arrived at the end of his journey, conducted by the angel, who is distinctly named Raphael in the Book of Tobias.

Another picture of the young Tobias in one of the compartments of a beautiful ceiling in the Cemetery of Saint Domitilla on the Ardeatine Way, running parallel with the Appian Way, represents him without the angel, but with the fish in his hand, and with all that elegance of classic art, which had lingered into the second Christian century. Still again in a fresco discovered in 1849 in the

Cemetery of Saints Thrason and Saturninus, —a very early cemetery,— Tobias is represented as giving the fish to the angel, who is clothed in a long tunic, while Tobias has only a scarf around his body.

There are, in fact, a great many representations of Tobias in the early catacombs, generally clad in a short tunic, girded, holding his hand in the mouth of the fish. He is seen thus on the bottom of a glass cup, gilded; and in another very similar cup, on an azure ground. It is supposed that these glass cups were used at the nuptial feasts, as Tobias and Sara were regarded as the models of Christian spouses; while a newly discovered painting in the Cemetery of Saint Saturninus gives the whole story of Tobias more fully than any representation known at present. In this picture he is seen preceded by his dog, and in his hand what looks like the heart of a fish; while on an ancient sarcophagus at Verona, he is seen on a portico with his dog who caresses an old man; thus representing the return of Tobias to his parents,—the office of the Archangel Ra-

phael being recognized even when he is not actually introduced; verifying the Christian belief in his ministrations.

Coming to the New Testament, and to the fifth chapter of Saint John, we have an account of the miracle performed by our Lord upon the paralytic, preceded by a detailed account of the same at a pool in Jerusalem called Probatica in Greek, signifying sheepfold, because near a sheep market; in Hebrew, Bethsaida, or fishing pool, with its five porches. "In these," the evangelist tells us, "lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered, waiting for the stirring of the water. And an angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pool and the water was stirred. And he that went down first into the pond after the stirring of the water was cured of whatever infirmity he suffered." The Angel of the Probatica is understood to be the Angel Raphael, as the Healing Angel, his name signifying, strictly, the "Medicine of God"; and it is under this aspect that he is regarded as the patron of physicians — of all who

LUINI

SAINT RAPHAEL AND TOBIAS

practice the benevolent healing art; while this is emphasized in all its lovely circumstances by the narrative of Tobias.

The devotional figures of Raphael often represent him in the dress of a pilgrim, girded, sandals on his feet, his hair bound with a fillet, the staff in his hand, and sometimes a water-bottle or a wallet slung from his belt. This, of course, indicates him as the Angel of the journey; but in other instances he carries a small casket, or box, in which is the gall or liver of the fish, as a protector against evil spirits, and also as a healing ointment, according to the angel's directions to the young Tobias for the restoration of his father's sight. He is thus represented in an exquisite picture by Perugino. His tunic is girded; his mantle, resting on one shoulder, is tucked under his belt; his left hand holds that of the young Tobias, while his right hand bears, with a gesture indicating advice or instruction, the casket with its precious ointment from the liver of the fish, taken at the very outset of their journey. The feet are unshod; all the draperies sug-

gestive of peace; and the beautiful head — how can we describe it? The hair, parted on the forehead, falls in loose waves on the shoulders; the face is bent toward his young charge, their eyes upon each other,— in the Angel's a look of the most tender, even solemn, solicitude, in the youth's one of affectionate veneration; over the whole an air of angelic watchfulness, but also of angelic peace, which passes into the soul of him who meditates as he looks upon it; rich in its lessons of heavenly wisdom, consoling in its assurances of angelic love.

Two charming compositions give us the return of Tobias, with the Angel Raphael, to his aged parents. In Luini's all the figures are half-length, but everything is told or suggested: the eager Anna pressing close to her returned son, devouring him with her happy eyes; the patient Tobias, patient in his blindness, both hands on his staff, listening to his beloved son, who is looking into his sightless eyes with tender compassion, while he tells the story of his journey, of the sojourn with their kinsman Raguel,— one hand laid

on his breast, as if this recital were of the heart more than of the memory; while his left hand still holds that of his beloved guide, protector, friend, to whom he owes all the joy he is communicating to his dear ones, who have waited and watched so long for his coming.

And our Angel, our Raphael — his tunic is girded and tucked under his belt, as one who has fared swiftly on his way; one hand, as we have said, still in that of his young charge, the other raised slightly with a gesture as if every word spoken were his own, so lively is his sympathy, so personal his interest in every detail as it is related. The wings, unseen by those whom he has served, rise softly from his shoulders, over which the parted hair falls in beauty; the eyelids are lowered, as if he were still minding his charge; but on the lips is a gentle smile of satisfaction, remembering lovely things accomplished,— a smile such as only Luini or Leonardo da Vinci has ever left on paper or canvas. The gentleness of the joy, almost tearful, fills the heart with a gratitude which is called forth by

heavenly favors, a sense of celestial benefactions.

The conception of this same scene by Von Deutsch, given in an exquisite engraving by the Düsseldorf Society, is more pronounced in its joyfulness. We see through the vine-clad arches of the Oriental porch a fair landscape, hills and homes, and a wide stream,— that of the river Tigris; and coming up to the arches, just so as to be seen, the train of camels and retainers who have accompanied Tobias on his return,— he who had gone forth alone, with his guide and his dog, in quest of a debt which would relieve their poverty in the midst of blindness.

All this tells the story of material good; but within the vine-clad arches the young Tobias has thrown himself, in an ecstasy of love and gratitude that he sees them still again, at the feet of father and of mother,— the father stretching forth his hands as if to embrace the son he does not see; Anna clasping him in a transport such as her waiting eyes have earned; while one hand of the young Tobias is laid around the young wife,

VON DEUTSCH

SAINT RAPHAEL AND TOBIAS

Sara, as if presenting her thus to his parents; and Anna actually embraces both. At the door come forth the friends and neighbors, or maids, who have watched and waited with this aged pair for the return of their son. All is happiness unspeakable; and just between the family group and the caravan outside stands our Raphael, without his wings, still the "beautiful young man, Azarias, the son of the great Ananias, girded as if ready to walk," his staff in his hand, looking on the happiness he has wrought by the command of God for His servant Tobias, who had again and again left his feasts and his friends to bury the dead, outcasts of his people and of his nation.

The whole wondrous story, redolent with everything sweet in human affection as well as heavenly grace, has been told from beginning to end, as no other has ever attempted to tell it, by Frederick Overbeck in the lower border of one of his great compositions setting forth the symbolism, type and ante-type, of the seven sacraments, this one elucidating the sacrament of holy matrimony; the fidelity

of these consecutive groups, as a narrative, to the Bible story being equaled by the nobleness of the conceptions themselves. The parting of the young Tobias from his parents, Anna's arms around his neck as if she could not give him out of her sight, the majestic form of the blind Tobias in the doorway of his house with his hands clasped in prayer, the angelic guide with his staff, urging Anna to allow her son to depart, pointing out the way; the scene at the river-side, where the great fish threatens to devour the young Tobias, but whose attack is changed by the angel guide to a benefaction; the meeting between the patriarch Raguel and his young kinsman, the Angel still at his side; then the betrothal of the young Tobias and Sara,—a group so beautiful that we must dwell upon it separately.

Tobias and Sara are seated opposite each other; at the side of Tobias is the angel guide; at the side of Sara, her mother, bending over her with pathetic solicitude; while Raguel, with patriarchal simplicity, gives his daughter to the son of his old friend and

OVERBECK

SAINT RAPHAEL AND TOBIAS

kinsman, as both extend their hands to be united in holy wedlock. Nothing more absolutely virginal than these two young spouses has ever been seen in art; we may almost say, never can be. Simplicity, a grace like that of a Greek antique, a tenderness and even solicitude such as the story, when remembered, calls for, make this group one of the pearls of art, one of the pearls of mortal imagination, and of mortal limning.

In the next group we see these young spouses lying, like two lilies, on their marriage-bed, sleeping sweetly side by side. A maid has forebodingly raised the curtain at their head, then has told the joyful news to Raguel and his wife, both in tearful prayer; while an open grave, we know, is waiting if their tears and their prayers have been fruitless. But, lo! in the corner of this apartment stands a tripod of coals, on which, at the command of Raphael, the angelic guide, Tobias had laid a particle of the liver taken from the fish, as told at the beginning of the narrative; and above the curling smoke we see the evil one, Asmodeus, expelled from

the room by virtue of the miraculous fish gall; while at the foot of the bed kneel Raguel and his wife,— Raguel with hands uplifted in praise, Anna with her head bowed in devout thanksgiving.

The next compartment gives the joyful return of Tobias to his parents; the anointing, according to the instructions given by the angel guide, of the blind eyes of his father with the ointment of the fish gall; the recognition by the father and the son of the angel guide, who declares himself openly to them: "I am the Angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord." And then, resuming the glory of the Archangel, he rises before their eyes into heaven.

Never has the fidelity of art to the Written Word, to the cherished oral traditions of thousands of years, been more beautifully exemplified than in the masterpieces we have cited; inspired as they have been by Raphael, that most gracious, most amiable of Archangels.

RAPHAEL

SAINT RAPHAEL AS PRINCE OF GUARDIANS

The Guardian Angels

"Behold an angel of the Lord called to him: Abraham, Abraham, lay not thy hand upon the lad. Now I know that thou fearest God."

"The Lord, in whose sight I walk, will send His angel with thee and will direct thy way."

"Behold I send my angel before thee, to keep thee in thy journey and bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Take notice of him: hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned; for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and My name is in him."

"The angel of the Lord went down with Azariah and his companions into the furnace; and he drove the flame of the fire out of the furnace and made the midst of the furnace like the blowing of a wind bringing dew."

"My God hath sent His angel and hath shut up the mouths of the lions, and they have not hurt me."

"I beheld till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days sat; thousands of thousands ministered to Him: and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him."

"For He hath given His angels charge over thee; to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

"See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father who is in heaven."

Thus from Abraham to the Gospels, and in the very words of our Lord Himself, through narrative, prophecy, psalm, comes the same gentle but strong assurance of those guardian spirits given to us by Almighty God, our Creator and theirs, to be our protectors amid all the dangers of this mortal life,—an assurance which, like some tender chord running through an oratorio, a symphony, is heard amid the tremors of appre-

hension, the crash of calamity, the wail of anguish, strengthening the courage for endurance, reviving hope, saving from despair.

These quotations which we have given from the Holy Scriptures have been culled and woven as lessons, antiphons, and responsories into the Office for the Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels; while the Introit for the Mass on this feast is that burst of praise from the heart of Israel's psalmist:

"Bless the Lord, all ye His angels; ye that are mighty in strength and execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders. Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless His holy name."

As a sentiment, this idea of angelic protectors is universal; as a belief, a positive dogma, it is often hardly more than nominal, and would seem to be held only in regard to little children or to the young; taking literally the words of our Lord, which, if actually pondered upon, imply an individual guardianship more personal than anything expressed by patriarch, prophet, or psalmist. It is this individual, personal relation between

each child of Adam and its guardian angel which is exemplified in the lives of the saints almost universally, and accentuated in several in a way to delight the artist, and bring out the poetical grace of lives which were, under other aspects, almost awful in their supernatural sublimity. Let us consult the great theologians, such as Saint Basil, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Jerome, Saint Anselm, Saint Bernard, Saint Thomas of Aquin,— "the Angelical," so called because he seemed to have taken his place, even while on earth, among those choirs which do always behold the face of the Father, who have ever before them the Beatific Vision.

Without giving separately and verbally all these authorities, let us sum up their united testimony coming down through the ages in a pæan of praise, of adoration to Him who has made these shining creations ministering spirits to those, primarily, only a little lower than the angels, but whose fall, through Adam, necessitated, for their restoration, the tragedy of Redemption.

Before the mother knew that another im-

mortal soul had been created, had been committed to her care, to take flesh of her flesh, to be clothed by her with a body, which, mortal as it must be, is to rise again united to its own soul as an undying existence,— at the very moment of this miracle of conception — a miracle still, though every hour and moment enacted the world over,— at this very moment, unconscious as the mother may have been, one of the shining angels before the throne of God was deputed to be the guardian of this newly created soul, its protector until its birth; its protector during its infancy, its youth, its manhood or womanhood; from which no circumstance in life could separate it; no temptation, not even sin; protecting it against evil spirits at the hour of death; defending it against malicious accusers at the bar of judgment; consoling it amid the pains of purgatory. One place only this faithful guardian does not enter, one anguish only is it not allowed to mitigate; the gate which closes upon the sinner condemned to everlasting punishment being the only one which closes upon the guardian

angel, while it joyfully conducts its charge to paradise itself and its everlasting joys, the friend, the companion of the beloved soul through all the cycles of eternity.

Such is the testimony of the Fathers to the office, and the fidelity to this office, of the Guardian Angels. Who of us can hear this testimony and not tremble at the thought of injuring this precious soul in charge of one of God's holy angels, of defrauding it of one grace, one joy, promised to Christ's little ones? Who, seeing it in peril, would not stretch out a hand to save it, to bring it to baptism, to assist it, helpless amid dangers? Or who, as time goes on, will dare to put a temptation before this soul, at whose side stands, in all the plenitude of celestial grace, in all the splendor of its angelic personality, its heaven-appointed guardian?

One fact is emphasized by these grand Fathers, these expounders of the sacred text, these interpreters of dogma. While Saint Thomas declares that each soul has its individual guardian, shared with no other, all declare that, although the guardian angel may

MURILLO

SAINT JOHN OF GOD

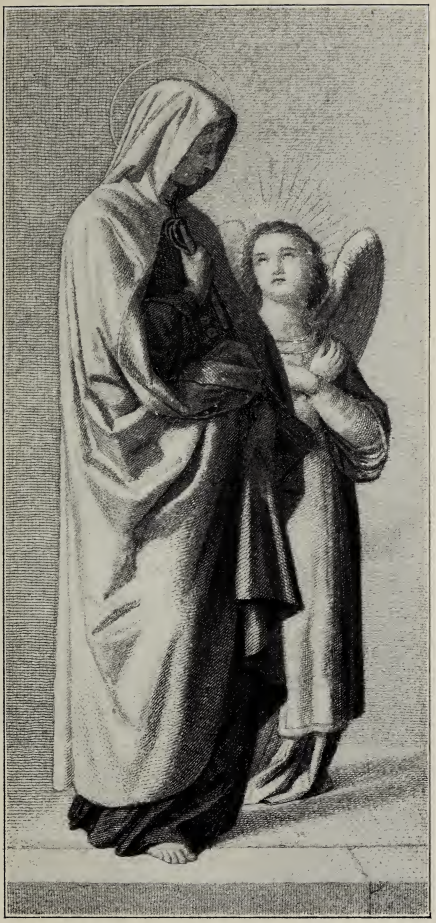
hide its face from the sin, it never leaves the sinner, the reprobate, until the final judgment; each soul having to answer for the use made of the graces, above all the opportunities for repentance, provided by its guardian angel.

Having thus summed up the dogma concerning the guardian angels, let us see if art has been its faithful exponent, for this Christian Art must be, if true to its vocation.

In his "Madonna with the Fish," as it is called, one of the treasures of the Museum of Madrid, "in which," as has been said, "Christian poetry finds its highest expression," Raphael has introduced the young Tobias, with his angelic guide, Saint Raphael, Archangel, under his title of "Prince of the Guardian Angels," their representative at the court of heaven; and never were the special attributes of the guardian angel more charmingly portrayed. How earnestly he presents his kneeling charge to the Divine Child in the arms of His Mother! How tenderly one hand supports the youthful figure, abashed before the Queen of Heaven,

the other holding his hand encouragingly! How earnestly he is pleading the cause of his young charge, telling the story of the great fish which Tobias, at his command, took so courageously by the gill, bringing it to land; the use made of the gall to free the innocent Sara from the spells of a demon; the cure wrought by it on the blinded eyes of his father, the patriarch of the captivity!

One can hear the story told by those eloquent lips, those beseeching eyes; and how the child almost springs from His Mother's arms to embrace this youth commended to Him by His beloved Archangel, who had, at His own command, set forth on this journey, brought all things to pass so happily by his zeal and angelic wisdom; and has now come to present to Him, under such a winning guise, the only son of an aged father and mother, the husband of a young wife, for the highest benediction of Heaven! This personification of the guardian angel, we can not but feel sure, was a most amiable expression of the love felt by the artist himself for his own guardian angel and for Saint Raphael, whose



ITTENBACH

SAINT FRANCES OF ROME

name he had been privileged to bear by that most reverent and ideal of fathers, Giovanni Sanzio.

At Seville, where the piety of Murillo proved to be the inspiration of his genius, we find Saint John of God represented with his guardian angel, on whom he had called in a dire strait of charity. This John of God, so called by the Bishop of Tuy, was the unconscious founder of the Order of Hospital Brothers, now spread throughout the Christian world; who took, in the spirit of obedience, the habit prescribed to him by this Bishop, although the rules which were binding on his order were not drawn up until six years after his death. His life after his conversion was a life of miracles.

One night, as he was carrying on his back a dying man to his hospital, his strength failed and he sank to the ground with his helpless burden. There was but one source of strength for our John of God; and his sigh as he fell to the ground was to his angel guardian. Instantly the help came; and we see John, still on his knees, still on his

shoulders the dying man, looking up into the face of the mighty angel with his long wings, whose hand is to raise John and his burden as one raises a child who has tottered and fallen.

There are two lovely pictures from the modern German school which we cannot pass over. One gives us Saint Frances of Rome, who for years was privileged to see and converse with her guardian angel. The Roman matron stands mantled from head to feet, the folds held by one hand, the other hand carrying the scourge with which she disciplines her flesh, besides practicing so many other mortifications from which we shrink. Her face, grand, serious, in deep shadow, turned toward the shining angel at her side, receiving his instructions, guided by his counsels; while his eyes are lifted heavenward, as if from thence he derived all wisdom and grace. This simple but eloquent composition is by Ittenbach. The second is by Mintrop, whose angels are always most winning. This charming conception gives us the guardian angel snatching up his infant

MINTROP

GUARDIAN ANGEL

charge and carrying him safely over a treacherous stream, into which he was in danger of falling; the frightened little one still clutching in his hand the flowers gathered on its edge.

But the eye of no one of our readers would be filled or any one heart satisfied if we did not put before it, not Fra Angelico's groups in any one of his Coronations, but that tenderest of all representations of guardian angels which he gives us in his Last Judgment, painted for the "Hermits," as they were called, "of the Camaldoli,"— an order whose life was one of meditation, and to whom the most mystical of the Angelical's imaginings would come with all the force which they had to his own mind.

We shall not describe the whole picture, only that part which relates to our subject. The Judge of the quick and dead has given His sentence to all who, having heard the trump of doom, have left vacant the graves occupied for thousands of years. Mary, who has heard all the sentences for weal and for woe; patriarchs, apostles, founders of reli-

gious orders — among them Saint Benedict, Saint Dominic, Saint Francis,— have heard the sentences also, sitting on their seats of judgment, bearing lilies in their hands. The condemned of every rank and condition are being led away; but on the right-hand side of the Judge we see what gives us a least possible glimpse of the joy of those to whom He has said: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" Faces are lifted which have looked on the face of God — of God sitting in judgment,— and yet rejoice, as it is given in the old Breviary hymn:

> Set in the light of Thy pure gaze
> And yet rejoice in Thee,—

faces so blissful that we seem never before to have beheld happiness,— the happiness full of gratitude, brimming with thanksgiving, radiant with praise. Never, we believe, have such blissful countenances been limned as these, looking full into the face of Him who redeemed them by His blood, sanctified them by His grace, has at the last judged them and

FRA ANGELICO

GUARDIAN ANGELS IN THE RESURRECTION

fixed them securely in a state of eternal happiness.

But another phase of this joyful story comes to the understanding. Some are turning, as if under an irresistible inspiration to meet — oh! what welcomes from outstretched hands, from glowing faces! They are met eye to eye, hand to hand, by their own angel guardians, wishing them joy, joining in their hymns of praise, and even reassuring some timid souls who cannot yet believe that, after all their shortcomings, their mortal blunders and weaknesses, they are actually saved — actually on the threshold of heaven.

Nothing can be more touching than these groups. Eager hands are stretched over the shoulders of those who stand between the angels and their lifelong charges; others tenderly embrace them, in their gladness that all is well; while, in one, both ransomed soul and angel kneel, folded in each other's arms; and we feel that tears are falling on the shoulder of the angel who has stood so faithfully by a sorely tried son of Adam, who has been a witness to his temptations, perhaps to

his many falls; but a witness also to his contrition and his final triumph over evil.

All this fills a certain part of the composition. But from these groups pass, in pairs of an angel and a soul,—each angel winged, each soul crowned with a wreath of eternal bloom; hand in hand, pair joined to pair; and we see the feet gliding, in that mystic dance which Fra Angelico loved, to music breathed forth in softest harmonies, most enchanting melodies, over meadows enameled with every gentle flower of spring. Then higher, higher pass the happy pairs, angels and souls, in waving lines of grace and beauty; until, under a sudden impulse, angels and souls dart into the heavenly radiance streaming down upon them from the open gates of paradise; and we know they are forever and forever before the throne of God and of the Lamb; that they are under the brooding wings of the Eternal Dove, that Mary and all saints and all angels are now their companions in bliss.

Lingering, as we cannot help doing, over these delineations of angels and archangels

which we have cited, embodying the tradition, belief, sentiment, of more than six thousand years at the hands of Christian artists from the first age of Christianity to this last year of our present century, can we not say with truth that art has been faithful to her trust?—taking her part in Christian civilization not merely as an adornment, but as a mighty factor in the uplifting of the intellect, the heart, the imagination of the world; a veritable bulwark of dogma by the testimony given from age to age through its monuments, as well as a never-failing incentive to devotion; inspiring us to unite our voices with that of the Church in her choirs: "Bless the Lord, all ye His angels; ye that are mighty in strength and execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders. Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts, ye ministers that do His will. O my soul, bless thou the Lord!"

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